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## February/March Farm and Market Report

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## COMMISSIONER'S COLUMN



Though the unusually mild early winter has passed, leading us to a more normal mid-winter, we all notice that slowly but surely the days are beginning to lengthen. Spring is approaching, and with that the seasonal “gearing up” begins! Among other signs of spring, our greenhouses are ramping up with seeds being sown more frequently.

Here at MDAR we have been busy through the shortest days of the year.

As part of the Commonwealth’s commitment to support Mass Agriculture, several of our grant programs recently made awards:

- The [MEGA](#) Grants for beginning farmers awarded \$78,582 in matching grants to 9 projects.
- The [APR Improvement Program \(AIP\)](#) awarded \$400,000 to 5 farms.
- The [Agricultural Food Safety Improvement Program \(AFSIP\)](#) awarded \$200,000 to 30 businesses, including several aquaculture operations.
- 6 Buy Local organizations received support grants totaling \$300,000.

Information on these and other MDAR competitive grant programs may be viewed [here](#).

The *Massachusetts Local Food Action Plan*, the first comprehensive state plan in more than four decades was formally released in mid-December at a very exciting event at the Western Mass. Food Processing Center (WMFPC) in Greenfield. We were very pleased that Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Matt Beaton and several legislators attended.

The next step for the Plan is for the Mass. Food Policy Council (which I chair) to decide on which of the many recommendations be prioritized as its initial action items. Complete information about the Plan and the Council is available [here](#).

If you produce a food product, you owe it to yourself to talk with John Waite at the [WMFPC](#), Jen Faigel at [Commonwealth Kitchen](#) in Dorchester (or similar operations) to learn if there are some value-added possibilities that may increase your bottom line.

I have visited these two facilities multiple times and recently accompanied Joint Committee of Environment, Natural Resources and Agriculture House Co-Chair Paul Schmid on a tour of each. Both operations have provided great benefit to our farms; they each have additional capacity to help more farms—give them a call.

Through the winter, MDAR has been working on two issues to which I know many in Ag are paying close attention: development of a *Massachusetts Pollinator Protection Plan* and working to address industry concerns to the Nutrient Management Regulations that were released last June. We have created working groups dedicated to each matter. They have been working internally on draft documents, reviewing multiple comments that have been collected, and soon they will soon be ready for stakeholder and general public review.

We are also anxious to start the work of the Cranberry Revitalization Task Force. The first meeting had to be postponed as it was scheduled for Wareham on the day of the February blizzard that hit Plymouth County. We are presently in the process of re-scheduling the next meeting of this 17-member group, no small task in itself.

My dairy education continued with my attendance at the December Agri-Mark Region 3 meeting in Northampton It was an excellent opportunity to learn in detail how the Cooperative works to maintain its members' viability.

The Board of Agriculture held its most recent meeting in Amherst in January. The Board received a very comprehensive briefing on UMass Extension's Agriculture and Green Industry programs from Jody Jellison, Director of the Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment and Director of UMass Extension and members of her team. The Board looks forward to strengthening the relationship between UMass Extension and MDAR.

I recently attended three industry gatherings. In January I attended the Massachusetts Association of Lawn Care Professionals meeting in Sturbridge. MDAR made separate presentations on nutrient training to staff and management and similarly provided continuing education to both groups on pesticides. I spoke to both groups on MDAR's statutory authority on pesticides and how from an organizational perspective it handles that responsibility.

In February, I attended two events from my Green Industry roots and saw many old friends. I attended the Mass. Flowers Growers' Association Winter Meeting at Cavicchio Greenhouses in Sudbury. Today I attended the Mass. Nursery and Landscape Association Annual Meeting and its first ever (and very well attended) Green Industry Career Fair in Boxborough. I heard a very interesting (and very entertaining) Keynote Address by Landscape Designer and MNLA Past President Tom Strangfeld. MDAR staffed informational tables at both events and I briefly addressed the attendees during the respective programs.

Finally, please allow me a brief personal note. February 13<sup>th</sup> is my first anniversary as Commissioner. It's been an honor, privilege and a great joy to go to work every day to make MDAR more relevant and valuable to all its customers in Mass. Agriculture. I shall be ever grateful to Governor Baker, Lt. Governor Polito and Secretary Beaton for their decision to appoint me and for their continued support.

I also want to thank the hardworking MDAR staff for all their help to me through my first year at MDAR, but more importantly for what they do every day to advance the department's mission: *"Helping to keep Massachusetts' food supply safe and secure; Working to keep Massachusetts agriculture economically and environmentally sound."*

My wife, Debbie and our kids have been incredibly supportive to me as I assumed the responsibilities of my new position.

So on that note, it's appropriate that I close with the sign we traditionally posted at our business each March as winter slowly begins to surrender to spring: "Sappy Days Are Here Again!"

John Lebeaux



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## FOREFRONT

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### Energy News

Energy Audits – Now is a great time - Don't Freeze Out Funding This Winter! As the colder weather sets in, consider what can be done while the ground waits to thaw. The Massachusetts Farm Energy Program is able to provide up to 75% of the cost of an energy audit. Audits are good for five years, and required for many grants.

Request yours now! 413-727-3090 • E-mail [info@massfarmenergy.com](mailto:info@massfarmenergy.com) or visit [www.massfarmenergy.com](http://www.massfarmenergy.com), and submit a *Request Form*.

### Upcoming Deadlines

The next REAP deadline for Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency grants and loan guarantees is April 30, 2016 for all project sizes. For more information on applying, [click here](#).

REAP Application Assistance - Need help preparing your REAP application? The Massachusetts Farm Energy Program is able to provide it! Our program recently received a grant to help farms prepare their REAP applications, at no cost. But don't wait until the deadline approaches; REAP applications can be submitted any time, so contact us now!

### Federal Business Investment Tax Credit (ITC) Extended

In December 2015, Congress extended the Business Investment Tax Credit (ITC) predominantly for solar related technologies through at least 2022. All Other technologies, including geothermal, small wind, fuel cells, combined heat and power, etc will still have the original ITC in-service deadline of December 31, 2016 in order to be eligible for the tax credit. In related news the federal Production Tax Credit (PTC) was also extended, a credit primarily assisting large-scale wind, electric generating biomass, hydro-electric etc. The PTC extension also allows the developer/owner to select between ITC and PTC. For more information on these two important federal tax credits please see the website of Data Base of State of Incentives for Renewable Energy (DSIRE) -

<http://programs.dsireusa.org/system/program/detail/658> and <http://programs.dsireusa.org/system/program/detail/734>

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## Massachusetts Dairy Promotion Board Solicits Proposals



The Massachusetts Dairy Promotion Board is soliciting proposals from non-profit organizations for projects that advance the image and sales of, and demand for Massachusetts dairy products. Applications are being considered through a competitive Request for Response (RFR) process. Complete details and link to the RFR [here](#).

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## Massgrown and Fresher Updates



In between shoveling or huddling in from the cold, take a few minutes to check to be sure your farm information is up to date. In 2015, the [Massgrown](#) website and map received over 600,000 webpage views. If you want to increase traffic to your site, link back to Massgrown. A logo can be downloaded and added to you own site, and then link back to [www.Mass.gov/Massgrown](http://www.Mass.gov/Massgrown). Send your edits to Rick LeBlanc, [Richard.LeBlanc@state.ma.us](mailto:Richard.LeBlanc@state.ma.us). We encourage everyone to use the state map as the source for all types of retail farms, markets, and ag-tivities!



New farmer? Open to the public? If you would like to be added to the map, please fill out the two page marketing survey ([.pdf](#) , [.doc](#) ).

Also, let us know about your special farm events! Our [Agricultural and Culinary Events Calendar](#) is one of our most popular *Massachusetts grown...and fresher* website features. Curious locavores and culinary travelers are eager to find a farm, culinary or community event. Submit your calendar listings [here](#) . Have a favorite farm/family recipe? Send that in as well to [Julia.Grimaldi@state.ma.us](mailto:Julia.Grimaldi@state.ma.us) and we will look to feature it as [Recipe of the Month](#). We also tweet them out from time to time [@Massgrown](#).

"Massgrown and Fresher" price cards and posters are now available. These are designed to be used to identify your crops and products at the farmers' markets and in your farmstand. [Click here](#) to see our various Massgrown posters, price cards, and order form.

The Massgrown [website](#) is now looking to map honey producers and beekeepers. If you produce honey, and are looking to increase sales, please fill out our two page survey  . If you offer workshops or classes on beekeeping, please let us know, and we will add to our Massgrown [Calendar](#) as well. To submit an agricultural related event, click on submission form [here](#), or send date, details, and website to [Julia.Grimaldi@state.ma.us](mailto:Julia.Grimaldi@state.ma.us). If you have honey bee or apiculture related questions, please contact Kim Skyrn at [Kim.Skyrm@state.ma.us](mailto:Kim.Skyrm@state.ma.us).



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## Emerald Ash Borer Preparedness Forum



In early January, the MA Dept. of Agricultural Resources (MDAR) partnered with the Massachusetts Forest Pest Task Force to hold an Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Preparedness Forum at Tower Hill Botanic Garden in Boylston, MA. The event had a great turnout, with over 65 participants from more than 30 communities across Massachusetts in attendance. This day-long forum provided attendees with an update on the current status of EAB in our state as well as information about what should be done to prepare for this pest and how to get the resources to do so. More importantly, participants, who were representatives from communities impacted or soon-to-be impacted by EAB, gathered together with experts, including representatives from MDAR, MA Dept. of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), US Forest Service, USDA, Cornell University, UMass Amherst, and National Grid, to discuss new ideas about how communities in Massachusetts can best prepare for and respond to EAB.



If you were unable to attend the forum or would simply like to check out all of the great resources provided that day, we have now made them available online! Detailed notes covering all of the day's sessions, PowerPoints for each of the presentations, and digital versions of the resources provided are now assessable at the following link: <http://bit.ly/1KD8ebS>

Nathan Siegert, of the US Forest Service, provides participants with an overview of EAB.

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## Public Hearing for the Dairy Farmer Tax Credit Regulations

A public hearing for the Dairy Farmer Tax Credit regulations (330 CMR 29.00) is scheduled to take place on **Monday, March 7, 2016** at DFW's Field Headquarters located at 1 Rabbit Hill Road, Westborough, from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. The hearing is as a result of last year's public hearing being cancelled because of the blizzard. The intent of the meeting is to receive oral and/or written testimony on the current amendment that addresses the trigger price concerns for the long-term future and prevents the need for future filings of emergency regulations.

For more information, please see the [Notice of Public Hearing](#).

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## 2015 Guy Paris Distinguished Service Award



Mike Botelho, from MDAR, received the 2015 *Guy Paris Distinguished Service Award* and recognition for his leadership in marketing and promotion of products from the [New England Vegetable and Berry Growers](#) industries at the December, 2015 NEVBGA meeting.

Michael Botelho started at MDAR in 2008. He previously organized the Dairy Revitalization Task Force and had considerable experience as a businessman familiar with setting up new ventures. He researched and developed the [Commonwealth Quality Program](#) “seal of quality” program that emphasizes Massachusetts locally grown products, highlights best management practices, agricultural product safety and the quality and freshness of the Commonwealth’s agricultural products.

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## Farm to Institution New England (FINE) Survey

Farm to Institution New England (FINE) is conducting research about the regional Farm to Institution (FTI) market. The FTI market includes public and private schools, colleges and universities, hospitals, and other institutions. Interested in your unique perspective on marketing and selling to institutions – [please take time to fill out this survey even if you do not currently sell to institutions.](#)

Results from this survey will help us better understand the challenges and opportunities presented by the FTI market – we will know more about how and when institutional markets are valuable for your farm business and what challenges and opportunities you are likely to face in expanding or entering it. State agencies, farm associations, farmers, and nonprofit organizations will all have access to research findings to use for their business and strategic planning.

As an incentive to participate FINE is giving away five \$100 gift cards. Just provide your contact information at the end of the survey to have a chance to win. The survey should take 5 to 20 minutes to complete, depending on whether you sell to any institutions and other factors. Survey here: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/FINEProducerSurvey](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FINEProducerSurvey).

All responses will be kept confidential. Information will be published in summary format only and will not be traceable to any individual farm. To learn more about FINE, visit [www.farmtoinstitution.org](http://www.farmtoinstitution.org) or contact Nessa Richman at [nessa@farmtoinstitution.org](mailto:nessa@farmtoinstitution.org).

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## FarmStart: Helping Beginning Farmers Get Started

FarmStart, an innovative Northeast program to help young people get started in farming, is pleased to announce that it is now in its tenth year of support for beginning farmers. Farm Credit East has released a report to illustrate the program’s success through the profiles of 11 FarmStart participants.

In celebration of the program’s tenth year, Farm Credit East released *Investing in the Success of Beginning Farmers: Ten Years of FarmStart*. This report profiles 11 FarmStart participants, some who are just getting started and others who have graduated the program. Each shares their advice for getting started and the new approaches many are using to garner success in the competitive agriculture industry. The report also looks at key challenges new farmers face.

To learn more about the FarmStart program, [click here](#). To view Farm Credit East's FarmStart 10-Year report, please [click here](#) or click to read below.

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## Federal State Marketing Improvement Program

The [Federal-State Marketing Improvement Program \(FSMIP\)](#) is a U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant program that funds projects that improve the efficiency and success of the U.S. agriculture marketing system. Every year, Congress decides on the appropriation amount, which generally falls between \$1.1 and 1.3 million. The average project award is \$60,000.00.

Eligible projects range from:

- Determining best methods for processing, distributing, or marketing agricultural products.
- Eliminating barriers to movement of agricultural products in various channels.
- Exploring new uses or markets for certain commodities.

Organizations seeking to assess challenges and develop methods or practices that could assist producers in marketing agricultural products that meet the mandates of the Food and Drug Administration's Food Safety Modernization Act are encouraged to apply.

The USDA has not yet released a Request for Applications for FY16 (usually come out in the Spring). The announcement will be posted in the Farm and Market Report and on the FSMIP webpage. Click [here](#) for more information on FSMIP and to view previously funded projects. For more information please contact Rebecca Davidson, FSMIP Coordinator, MDAR, 617-626-1744, [Rebecca.Davidson@State.ma.us](mailto:Rebecca.Davidson@State.ma.us).

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## Application Now Available for the Massachusetts Building at the Eastern States Exposition (The Big E)

The mission of the Massachusetts Building is to showcase Massachusetts agriculture, commerce, culture, and tourism through informational, educational, promotional and retail exhibits. The MDAR invites Massachusetts organizations and businesses to apply for the opportunity to exhibit in the Massachusetts Building at the Eastern States Exposition located in West Springfield, Massachusetts. The dates for the 2016 Big E are September 16, 2016 through October 2, 2016. Massachusetts Day will be Thursday, September 22, 2016. This year, [The Big E](#) will be celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary! [Dates, details and application here.](#)

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## Zika Virus Information

Due to the recent news and the media around the Zika virus, here are details and facts around it.

- Zika virus is a mosquito-borne illness currently spreading in parts of the world that have a **certain species of mosquito, *Aedes aegypti***.
- Zika virus is being linked to an uprise in birth defects (microcephaly) in babies born to women who have been infected with Zika virus, but as of right now, no definite link has been established.
- There are currently no "locally transmitted" cases of Zika virus being spread by mosquitoes in the US. The US cases in the news are all "travel cases" acquired in another country.

- There was recent news of a single case of a man in Texas where Zika virus was sexually transmitted from a woman who acquired the virus visiting another country. As far as we know right now, this is not common.
- **Massachusetts does not have *Aedes aegypti*.** However, we do have limited populations of another mosquito, *Aedes albopictus*, that is thought to be able to transmit Zika virus. There are a lot of maybes here, but chances of a Zika virus outbreak in Massachusetts are currently very small.

Fact Sheet and more about this mosquito-borne illness:

[www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/id/epidemiology/providers/mosquito/zika-virus.html](http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dph/programs/id/epidemiology/providers/mosquito/zika-virus.html)

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## UPCOMING EVENTS / WORKSHOPS

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### Farmer & Chef Networking Series

**February 15** - 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm, Powisset Farm, 37 Powisset St., Dover, MA

Farmer & Chef Networking Series - Are you a farmer looking to sell more locally? Perhaps a chef seeking to purchase more local grown product? Join [SEMAP](#), [WhatsGood](#), and the [Trustees of Reservations](#) for an exciting (and FREE!) networking event where farmers and chefs can meet, gather, and learn new ways to sell and purchase local goods, including using mobile technology. [More here.](#)

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### Open House for Farmers at Commonwealth Kitchen

**February 18** – 10:00 am - 12:30 pm, 196 Quincy St. Dorchester MA

Open House for Farmers at [CommonWealth Kitchen](#) to explore contract production services for value-added products: Sauces, pickles and jams...Explore contract production to add value to your fruit and vegetables! The Kitchen is a licensed commercial kitchen in Boston, can make value-added products for you from your excess farm produce or seconds, to be sold at farmers markets, farm stands, retail stores or foodservice customers including colleges. Come learn what we offer and what you need to know about costs, labeling and licensing.

An overview of the agenda for the info. session include: Overview and Sales Outlet Options; Product Possibilities and Costs; Licensing, Labels and Marketing; Question and Answers; Tour of Commonwealth Kitchen Facilities.

[Click here to RSVP!](#) Questions? Contact Roz from Commonwealth Kitchen at [roz@commonwealthkitchen.org](mailto:roz@commonwealthkitchen.org).

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### Massachusetts Farm Wineries and Growers Association Annual Meeting

**February 23** - Publik House, 277 Main Street (Route 133), Sturbridge

The day will feature a round table discussion for new and seasoned winery owners covering topics like: financing your winery, social media and marketing, vendor relationships and sourcing supplies. We will also have a brief update on the legislative issues facing MA Farm Wineries. The afternoon will feature a workshop with Christopher Gerling of Cornell university, on the handling of high acids in hybrid grape wines. Continental breakfast, a mid-day wine and cheese sampling and buffet lunch are included in the ticket cost. Wine makers are encouraged to bring a bottle of wine to share. Please email [MAFWGA@gmail.com](mailto:MAFWGA@gmail.com) directly to register.

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# Improving Dairy Productivity and Profitability

**February 24** – 10:00 am - 3:30 pm - UMass Crop and Animal Research and Education Center, 89-91 River Rd., South Deerfield, MA

This full day event focuses on farmers and industry perspectives on robotic milking. We will discuss if robotic milking is a viable option for your farm. Come and speak with farmers who have the system in place to get the facts. In addition, presenters from a multi state collaboration will discuss some options for improving productivity and profitability of forage production.

Highlights include: Pros and cons of robotic milking; Alternative forage systems; Extending grazing season. Attendees will enjoy interactive presentations, panel discussions, lunch, and refreshments from UMass, UVM, and UMaine faculty and extension educators. Registration fee is \$20 per person; including lunch. For more information or directions contact Kelly Kraemer, 413-545-5221, [kkraemer@umass.edu](mailto:kkraemer@umass.edu).

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## MA Association of Agricultural Commissions Annual Meeting and Educational Sessions

**February 27** – 9:00 am – 3:45 pm, Holiday Inn, 265 Lakeside Ave, Marlborough (next to MA Farm bureau offices).

Along with annual meeting, sessions include: Existing MA Animal Regulations, Processes and Oversight, Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), Pesticide Session for Beginning to Experienced Farmers with BMP's for Neonicotinoids and a Discussion on Worker Safety Protocols. [More here.](#)

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## Agricultural Fairs Judging Training

**February 27** - 8:00 am – 3:00 pm: Young Building conference room, Eastern States Exposition Fairgrounds, 1305 Memorial Avenue, West Springfield. **No snow date.**

In order to be a **Certified Judge for Fruits, Vegetables, Canning and Community/ Grange Exhibits**, a judge candidate needs to attend an instructional training as well as take a test based on the information presented at the instructional training. To become a Class One Certified Judge, the judge candidate will be required to pass the test with a score of 80% or higher. To become a Class Two Certified Judge, the judge candidate will be required to pass the test with a score of 80% or higher as well as mentor a Massachusetts Certified Agricultural Fair Judge(s) to at least three (3) agricultural fairs held in Massachusetts within 18 month from the date of passing the test. The complete agenda can be found [here](#).

To register fax or email the [registration form](#) to the attention of Julia Grimaldi, fax: 617-626-1850 or email: [julia.grimaldi@state.ma.us](mailto:julia.grimaldi@state.ma.us). Questions: 617-626-1763. **Registration Deadline is Wednesday, February 24.**

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## SEMAP's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Ag & Food Conference

**February 28** - 9:00 am - 5:30 pm - Bristol County Agricultural High School, 135 Center St., Dighton, MA

Join the [Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership \(SEMAP\)](#) for their biggest event of the year! With over 25 workshops, including a Livestock Track, sessions geared towards farmers & gardeners, kids workshops,

opportunities to earn pesticide credits, and plenty for the foodie, there is sure to be something for everyone. Ali Berlow, author of The Food Activist Handbook, will be the keynote speaker. [More here.](#)

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## Natural Beekeeping Course

**February 29** - Bristol Community College, Mondays, 6:00 pm - 7:50 pm

Get the buzz about beekeeping! Aspiring and new beekeepers will learn the essential skills to begin a hobby or small business as a beekeeper including purchasing and establishing a hive, caring for your bees, enhanced pollination, disease and pest management, and harvesting the honey. 6-week course on Mondays, emphasizes organic methods of beekeeping, includes at least one field day demonstration of installing, feeding, and the beginning steps of establishing a hive. Participants will have the opportunity to purchase their own bees, hives and equipment. Register at [www.Bristolcc.edu](http://www.Bristolcc.edu) (look under Organic Farming in the Course Search). Questions? [james.corven@bristolcc.edu](mailto:james.corven@bristolcc.edu).

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## Growing Minds Through Agriculture: Make Your School Garden Bloom Even More!

**March 5** - Pathfinder Regional Vocational Technical High School, 240 Sykes Street Palmer.

Growing Minds Through Agriculture: Make Your School Garden Bloom Even More! Do you already have a thriving school garden or are you just in the planning stages to start a school garden? Whether “Veteran” or “Newbie”, you will find a workshop at this conference that will help you improve your gardening skills. Offers educational and networking resources, activity ideas and framework connections that can facilitate and enhance pre-K through 12th grade classroom teachers alike and help bring agriculture to the classroom. [Details and register here.](#)

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## 5<sup>th</sup> Local Food Trade Shows to Stimulate the Trade of Local Food in New England

**March 8** - 8:30 am to 2:00 pm - Curry Student Center, Northeastern University

Close to 100 local food producers and suppliers, farmers, value-added producers of local specialty products, and fishermen will connect with retailers, wholesalers and institutional buyers for the [5th Local Specialty Crop & Local Food Trade Shows](#) presented by [Sustainable Business Network of Massachusetts](#). The MDAR Commissioner John Lebeaux will be a special guest speaker for the event.

### Local Specialty Crop Trade Show

Exhibitors will include New England based farmers, produce distributors and local [specialty crop](#) producers (products made with 50% or more specialty crops also qualify). Please view the USDA definition of specialty crops [here](#). This Trade Show is funded through a USDA Specialty Crop Grant through MDAR. Exhibition booths are free for specialty crop farmers and other specialty crop producers.

### Local Food Trade Show

This trade show is open to all non-specialty crop food producers including meat and dairy farms, fisheries, baked goods and other added value producers. Exhibition booths are \$125.00. \*\$25 Discount for SBN Members.

### Who should attend?

Any wholesale buyers, who are interested in purchasing Massachusetts or New England-produced food items. These buyers can be supermarkets, co-ops, restaurants, hotels, institutions, schools, food processors in search of ingredients, distributors, or anyone else interested in local purchasing options.\*\*This event is intended for commercial buyers, not individual consumers.\*\*

Local Food Buyers and Producers are Invited to Meet and Begin Doing Business.

Specialty Crop Vendors – [Register Here](#)

Local Food Vendors – [Register Here](#)

Buyers & Attendees – [Register Here](#)

Volunteer – [Sign Up Here](#)

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## The Fresh Food Movement in Central Massachusetts

**March 9** - 5:30 pm - 7:30 pm, The Hanover Theatre, Worcester, MA - The Hanover Theatre in partnership with [Central Mass Grown](#) will present *Building a Sustainable Worcester: The Fresh Food Movement in Central Massachusetts*, as part of the theatre's Access Hanover Lyceum Series. The event which is sponsored by National Grid, will focus on the future of farming in the region and the potential it holds for building a greener, healthier and more sustainable community. In addition, it will cover the Agricultural economy's viability in providing good jobs, business opportunities, changing food policy, land conservation, healthier food choices and making Worcester County a more desirable place to live, work and visit.

Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs Matthew Beaton will begin the program with opening remarks. Al Rose, owner of Red Apple Farm in Phillipston, will be the evening's keynote speaker. A panel discussion, moderated by Senator Anne Gobi will include panelists: Ken Toong, Executive Director of UMass Auxiliary Enterprises; Kate Stillman, owner of Stillman Quality Meats; Maria Moreira, Executive Director of World Farmers Inc.; John Lawrence, owner of Peppers Fine Catering; Steve Fisher, Executive Director of Regional Environmental Council of Central Massachusetts will give an update on the Worcester Regional Food Hub project.

The presentation will be followed by a networking reception and Sustainability Exhibit, featuring sustainability projects, area growers and farmers, local businesses, and non-profit groups. The theatre encourages all sectors of the community to attend--business, academia, the public or non-profit sectors, building a more sustainable region benefits us all.

This Access Hanover Lyceum event is free to Hanover Theatre Partner members and their guests / \$10 for the general public. Please call the box office at 877-571-7469 or on line at [TheHanoverTheatre.org](http://TheHanoverTheatre.org).

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## 2016 PVGrows Forum: Local Food, Healthy Communities

**March 9** - 12:00 pm – 5:00 pm; Gateway City Arts, 92 Race St., Holyoke. Networking event to follow from 5:00 pm – 7:00 pm.

The 2016 PVGrows Forum will examine the ways in which health and local food are connected, and specifically how issues of access, affordability and equity in our local food system impact health outcomes for our communities, and disproportionately so for poor communities and communities of color. [More here.](#)

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## 4th Annual Massachusetts Urban Farming Conference

**March 12** - 7:45 am - 5:30 pm, Northeastern University Curry Student Center, 346 Huntington Ave, Boston, MA

The annual [Massachusetts Urban Farming Conference \(UFC\)](#) is designed to advance the opportunities and address the barriers involved in cultivating a resilient and thriving Urban Farming sector. The 4th Annual Massachusetts UFC is comprised of interactive panels, demonstration workshops, expert discussions on diverse and relevant topics with leading practitioners.

**KEYNOTE:** *The Cuban Agroecology Movement: Are There Lessons for Massachusetts' Urban Farmers?* Presenter: Greg Watson, Director for Policy and Systems Design. Cuba-U.S. Agroecology Network at Schumacher Center for a New Economics

**CLOSING PANEL:** *Community Organizing and Supporting Urban Farming; Discussion on Social Justice, Economics, Food Sovereignty and Race* with Karen Washington, Farmer and Activist, NYC

Panels (Complete list [here](#))

- Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Youth Development
- Farming in the City-The key elements that can make your urban farm more profitable and productive.
- Getting Your Added Value Product to Market
- Urban Food Production and Addressing Climate Change
- Greenhouse Design and Management
- Alternative Markets: Systems and Strategies
- Health Outcomes: Urban Agriculture and Data Collection
- Cultural Crops: Production, Markets and Profits
- Aquaponics Workshop
- Farm Planning: What You Need to Know Before You Quit Your Job
- Soil Health: Testing and Interpretation Relevant for Urban Soils
- Land Tenure: Land Trusts and Ground Leases

[\\$50 Early Bird Registration \(by February 19<sup>th</sup>\)](#) - For Panel/Workshop information or sponsorship and vendor opportunities , contact Rose Arruda at MDAR: [Rose.Arruda@state.ma.us](mailto:Rose.Arruda@state.ma.us).



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## RecyclingWorks Compost Site Workshop

**March 15** - 1:00 pm - 5:00 pm, MassDEP Central Regional Office, Worcester.

RecyclingWorks is hosting a no-cost workshop for compost site operators in Massachusetts. The half-day workshop will focus on operator competency in compost management and regulatory compliance, with focus on composting food materials. This workshop will cover: Food materials composting operations registered with MDAR or MassDEP, municipal operators, small scale site operators, other interested parties considering starting a compost site. [More here.](#)

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## Agritourism Workshops

Have an interest in becoming part of the growing “**Agritourism**” trend in Massachusetts? Join us for the first in a series of workshops with successful agritourism businesses and tourism professionals on how to plan for and promote tourism at your farm. These free, half-day workshops will offer practical strategies and resources for bringing tourism to your agricultural business. Complete program details coming soon. Please **SAVE THE DATES** below and contact Julia Grimaldi at 617-626-1763 or [Julia.Grimaldi@state.ma.us](mailto:Julia.Grimaldi@state.ma.us) for more information. Hosted by [Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources](#), the [Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism](#), and the [Massachusetts Office on Disability](#).

### SAVE THE DATE

**March 22** - Hosted by Red Apple Farm, Phillipston, MA  
Topics: Pick-your-own, farm store & value-added products

**March 31** - Hosted by Smolak Farms, North Andover, MA  
Topics: Agriculture, education & entertainment

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## Northeast Harvest Annual Agricultural Conference

**March 29** - 9:00 am - 3:00 pm, Coolidge Hall, Topsfield Fairgrounds, Topsfield, MA. The conference will offer several workshops and the opportunity to earn PACE (Pesticide) Credits. [www.northeastharvest.com](http://www.northeastharvest.com)

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\*More events at MDAR's [Calendar](#)

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## USDA NEWS

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### USDA Rural Development - Value-Added Producer Grant

**VAPG 101 Webinar - February 24**, from 10:00 - 11:30 am - How do you get from tomatoes to sriracha or cucumbers to pickles? What makes a qualified applicant? What goes into a grant application? This workshop focuses on details about the Value-Added Producer Grant including eligibility, application, project development and more. All interested potential applicants, producers and program supporters are welcome. Please RSVP to Christine Kimball at [Christine.Kimball@ma.usda.gov](mailto:Christine.Kimball@ma.usda.gov) or 413-253-4329. Login and dial in instructions will be sent approximately one week prior to the event.

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### Organic Agriculture Webinar Series

The Organic Agriculture Webinar series was developed by NRCS and Oregon Tilth for NRCS field staff, and may also be of interest to partners, producers and others.

They started in February and run through December. Join the webinars live at 3 pm EST at [ConservationWebinars.net](http://ConservationWebinars.net). Webinars will also be archived for later viewing. Nearly fifty organic webinars are currently available (use the search term “organic”). Webinars are free, open to all, and brought to you by the NRCS Science and Technology Training Library.

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## How Much Money are You Willing to Risk?

The deadline for crop disaster coverage is March 15 - Massachusetts farmers need to assess the level of disaster protection they would like for 2016. Growers should consider how much money they are willing to risk on their crops this year! USDA no longer provides funding for crop losses after a disaster strikes. Farmers are expected to assess the risk they face in this growing season and develop their own risk management plan. These plans may include some level of insurance coverage to protect the growers' investment in the 2016 crop. The 2014 Farm Bill included a wide variety of disaster type programs for both crops and/or revenue. The Farm Bill also includes provisions to protect organic and direct market producers as well as reducing the cost for beginning, historically underserved and limited resource farmers.

The following programs are available to Massachusetts farmers:

[Whole Farm Revenue Protection \(WFRP\)](#) - WFRP provides growers with farm revenue protection from crop or market losses. WFRP replaced the Adjusted Gross Revenue policies that have been available in previous years. WFRP is sold by crop insurance agent. Check with your crop insurance [agent](#).

Individual Crop policies - Growers can purchase federal crop insurance on potatoes, fresh market sweet corn, tobacco, corn (grain/silage). These policies protect growers from natural disaster losses. Check with your crop insurance [agent](#).

[Non-Insured Crop Disaster Assistance \(NAP\)](#) - NAP is available on all annual crops not covered by crop insurance. Farmers can now purchase coverage up to 65% of the growers yield and 100% of the established price. NAP is sold by the [USDA Farm Service Agency \(FSA\)](#).

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## **USDA Offers Farmworker Housing Loans and Grants**

Pre-applications for construction or purchase and substantial rehab of off-farm housing are due April 12. Rental Assistance and operating assistance are available. Projects serving high poverty census tracts will receive additional points. Additional information can be found at: [www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/farm-labor-housing-direct-loans-grants](http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/farm-labor-housing-direct-loans-grants). Contact your [local USDA Rural Development Office](#) for an application package.

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## **USDA Conservation Stewardship Program Offers Help to Local Farmers to Improve Working Lands**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture recently announced that \$150 million in funding is available for agricultural producers across the country through the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), a federal conservation program that helps farmers voluntarily improve the health and productivity of private and Tribal working lands.

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) plans to add an estimated 10 million acres to the rolls of CSP during fiscal 2016. NRCS accepts applications for CSP throughout the year, but producers should submit applications by March 31 to USDA service centers to ensure they are considered for enrollment in 2016. [More here](#).

This microloan announcement is another USDA resource for America's farmers and ranchers to utilize, especially as new and beginning farmers and ranchers look for the assistance they need to get started. To learn more about the FSA microloan program visit [www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans), or contact your local FSA office. To find your nearest office location, please visit <http://offices.usda.gov>.

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## **USDA, NFL, Fuel Up to Play 60, Partner to Award \$35 Million to Help Schools Serve Healthier Meals, Strengthen Childhood Nutrition**



## Grants Will Improve Food Service Equipment, Upgrade Infrastructure Critical to Building Healthy Schools and Communities

Amid pre-Super Bowl 50 celebrations last weekend, Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack, NFL Commissioner, Roger Goodell, and Paul Rovey, dairy farmer and leader of the National Dairy Council (NDC), announced the availability of \$35 million in grants to help schools upgrade their kitchen equipment and infrastructure in order to offer students better access to nutritious foods.

Three in five students – more than 30 million children – rely on the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program for one to two meals per day, however according to a 2014 survey, 88% of schools reported lacking at least one piece of equipment they needed in order to serve healthier foods. These grants will give millions of additional children access to more nutritious meals by providing schools with the funds to purchase additional equipment to help them meet updated national nutrition standards, and serve healthy meals with more whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean protein and low-fat dairy, and less sodium and fat.

Since 2009, USDA has awarded \$215 million in school nutrition equipment grants, including \$30 million announced recently. USDA provides this funding to states, which then competitively award grants to school districts in order to purchase necessary equipment, giving priority to high-need schools where 50 percent or more of the enrolled students are eligible for free or reduced price meals. This year, Fuel Up to Play 60, who has provided more than \$22 million in funds to schools throughout the country, is joining USDA's effort by providing an additional \$5 million through a separate, but concurrent, grant application process.

Schools can apply for USDA funding through their state, or for funds from Fuel Up directly through the organization's website. In both cases, funding will support the purchase of new equipment and/or the renovation/replacement of equipment. Equipment may include large and small items including utility carts, utensils, large-capacity food processors, industrial scales, steamers, freezers etc. Infrastructure elements may include building needs related to physical space, electricity, plumbing, ventilation and other remodeling needs.

Schools that are interested in learning more about these grants should visit [www.fns.usda.gov/nsfp-equipment-assistance-grants](http://www.fns.usda.gov/nsfp-equipment-assistance-grants).

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## **CLASSIFIED / BRIEFS / JOB OPPORTUNITIES**

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- **New Entry Sustainable Farming Project is hiring two, full-time positions** to support beginning farmers. Both positions are full-time, year round with benefits and are located in the Lowell office with travel throughout Massachusetts and the region. Both positions are available immediately. For more information and full job descriptions, see: [www.nesfp.org/about/employment-opportunities](http://www.nesfp.org/about/employment-opportunities). **Technical Assistance and Incubator Farm Site Coordinator** - responsible for providing year-round technical assistance (TA) and training to small-scale beginning farmers, both on and off the field, on multiple aspects of farm enterprise development. Manage New Entry incubator farms and equipment, determine best approach for site improvements, and facilitate crop production (emphasizing organic techniques) to achieve lease compliance. Teach New Entry's Farm Business Planning Courses and seasonal field-based trainings to beginning farmers and provide technical assistance to help producers achieve their commercial farming goals. The position is full-time, year round with benefits. Apply online here: <http://tsne.org/technical-assistance-and-incubator-farm-site-coordinator-nesfp>. **Beginning Farmer Resources Coordinator** - will provide year-round technical assistance (TA) and training to small-scale, direct market beginning farmers, both on and off the field, on multiple aspects of farm enterprise development, including teaching New Entry's Explore Farming courses. This person will also manage the statewide Beginning Farmer Network of Massachusetts (bfnmass.org), and conduct intake and case management/technical assistance for participants in New Entry programs and services. Another major responsibility of this role is to support urban farmer training in collaboration with Urban Farming Institute of Boston. The position is full-time, year round with benefits. Apply online here: <http://tsne.org/beginning-farmer-resource-coordinator-new-entry-sustainable-farming-project>.
- **Horticulture/Arboriculture Intern** - [Mount Auburn Cemetery](#), 580 Mount Auburn St., Cambridge, MA: Position will split between the arboriculture and the gardening departments. Arboriculture duties would include performing tree maintenance procedures such as pruning, planting, cabling and removals. Stockbridge Majors: Arboriculture,

Landscape Contracting Plant and Soil Sciences, Sustainable Horticulture, Application Deadline: Friday, April 1. More [More here.](#)

- **Farm Land Opportunity in Petersham** - For beginning or established farmers who need a place to farm. The land is cleared and a portion (100' x 40') has been tilled and was farmed last year. Another even larger space has been mowed for two years and could be tilled or could be farmed using no-till methods. The total space available is around 1.5 acres. Motivation is to have the land used and to support local folks who wish to grow food everywhere. Diane Nassif, [dianenassif@gmail.com](mailto:dianenassif@gmail.com).
- **Farm for Sale** - 45 acre organic diversified farm for sale by owners, see photos and description [here](#), 45 acres Vermont, \$369,000. Email [wrcinashfield@yahoo.com](mailto:wrcinashfield@yahoo.com) for more info.
- **New & Used/Reconditioned Foodservice Equipment** - Alternative Sales Corp, in Kingston, NH has over 3000 items of new & used foodservice equipment on-site. Reconditioned & warranty with used equipment. Have gas-fired & electric convection oven, steamers, ranges, griddles, fryers, pasta cookers, char-broilers, kettles, tilt skillets, ice machines, mixers, slicers, glass & solid door refrigerators & freezers, walk-in boxes, ice cream dipping cabinets, deli & pastry display cases, sinks, dish washing machines & dish room supplies, stainless steel tables & equipment stands, small appliances, smallwares & table wares in our used equipment inventory to meet all the equipment needs of the budget-minded farm stand owner and the small food production entrepreneur. Stock foodservice & plumbing repair parts, also new faucets, pre-rinse sprays, grease traps, gas valves & fittings, quick disconnects, gaskets, hinges & covers, thermostats, refrigeration items, casters – and lots of other items too numerous to list. Visit [www.alternativesales.net](http://www.alternativesales.net) or call Henry Biagi, 603-642-3873 for personal assistance with any equipment needs.

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## About the *Farm & Market Report*

Published bi-monthly by MDAR:

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MDAR's mission is to ensure the long-term viability of agriculture in Massachusetts. Through its four divisions – Agricultural Conservation & Technical Assistance, Agricultural Markets, Animal Health, and Crop and Pest Services – MDAR strives to support, regulate and enhance the rich diversity of the Commonwealth's agricultural community to promote economically and environmentally sound food safety and animal health measures, and fulfill agriculture's role in energy conservation and production. For more information, visit MDAR's website at [mass.gov/agr](http://mass.gov/agr), and/or follow at [twitter.com/MDARCommish](https://twitter.com/MDARCommish).